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ABSTRACT

An overview is presented of studies, reports, and articles dealing with the teaching profession, particularly in the area of teacher education. Most of the data reflect negative implications at various stages of the teacher development process, from selection of teacher candidates, through admission, selection during preparation programs, graduation, hiring, and retention. Attention is frequently focused on the generally low qualifications of students entering schools of education, the relatively easy admission criteria of many schools, and a decline in the academic ability of beginning teachers. Dissatisfaction with teaching and low salaries cited in the research reflect employment conditions in the teaching profession. It is noted that job opportunities have also been meager, although there appeared to be improvement, particularly at the elementary school level. General dissatisfaction with teaching and teacher education cited in the studies has led to a large number of major proposals for reform of teacher education and improved salaries. The most commonly cited reform issues in the literature are teacher certification examinations, internships, recruitment, salaries, admissions, extended programs, performance evaluation, and recertification. (JD)

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# THE STATUS OF THE PROFESSION:

# SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHING

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THE STATUS OF THE PRCFESSION:

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHING

Robert A. Roth

Recently numerous studies, reports, and articles have been published on several aspects of the teaching profession, particularly in the area of teacher education. The profession has been the subject of a great deal of scrutiny for a variety of reasons such as declining test scores and general public unrest. The purpose of this article is to summarize the status of the profession with emphasis on teacher education. Major areas addressed will be entry into the profession, the job market, continuing professional development, conditions in teaching, the image of teaching and teacher education, and reform efforts.

## Qualifications of Those Seeking Education Careers

Several studies have been conducted which identify the academic qualifications of individuals seeking teaching as a career. Weaver found that "the average SAT verbal and math scores of college-bound high school seniors who planned to major in education were well below average for all college-bound seniors tested in 1976 (34 points below average on verbal scores, 43 below average on math scores)," and "of 19 fields of study reported by ACT for enrolled college freshmen in 1975-76, education majors were tied for seventeenth place on math scores and fourteenth on English scores" (Weaver, 1979, p. 30).

College Entrance Examination Board data show that not only were scores of intended education majors lower than all college-bound seniors in 1973, but by 1981 the gap had widened further. The mean math scores for intended education majors, for example, dropped 31 points while the mean score for all students dropped only 15 points. SAT verbal scores of intended education majors dropped 27 points while mean scores for all college-bound seniors dropped 21 points (Dearman and Plisko, 1982, pp. 87-88, 110). Weaver, however, found that although prospective education students' mean verbal scores were at the 37th percentile in 1972 and 1980, their mean math scores

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increased from the 37th to the 34th percentile in 1980 (Weaver, 1981). Other characteristics of education students (sex, type of community raised in, parent occupations, and reasons for choosing teaching) can be found in NEA's Status of the American Public School Teacher, 1980-81.

Admission and Selection

Data are also available on admission requirements for teacher education. Shank (1978) collected data which showed that 96.8% of teacher education programs use grade point average as a criterion, as well as language proficiency (77.5%), interviews (53.8%), biographic information (52.2%), and others. Carpenter (1973) surveyed AACTE member institutions and found that for admission 48% used a GPA of 2.0 or less (on a 4 point scale), 31.5% used a GPA between 2.01 and 2.25, and 13.5% used a GPA between 2.26 and 2.5.

Brubaker and Patton (1975) studied admissions procedures used by North Central Association colleges accredited by NCATE and concluded that "despite the lengthy list of criteria utilized for admission, most institutions were denying admission to fewer than ten percent of the applicants." Biographical data and interest measures have been the most consistently reliable, valid, and acceptable criteria (Breland, 1981).

Teacher education has also been found to be the least selective on or after admitting students. In studying SAT scores, Weaver (1979, p. 31) found education ranked lowest in net change in both math and verbal test scores when comparing scores of college-bound applicants with scores of degree recipients.

Competency Examinations For Entry

As another means of screening students, but after graduation, competency examinations for teacher certification have been introduced. In 1981, 17 states had adopted provisions for competency-based teacher certification. Ten states developed their own examinations, six used the NTE, and one used both (Dearman and Plisko, 1982). Another study identified 23 states which require competency tests for teacher

certification or in teacher education programs (Valdes, 1982). A third study showed 12 states have legislatively mandated testing requirements for admission into teacher education programs (Ward, 1981).

In one state, however, actions were taken which seemed contrary to this movement. The Virginia Board of Education has "agreed to give provisional certification as secondary-school teachers to liberal-arts graduates untrained in teaching methods" and the announcement "was greeted with enthusiastic applause and shouts of Hear, hear! . . . at the annual meeting of Southern Regional Education Board" (Ingalls, 1982). At the same time Virginia requires the NTE for teaching candidates. The Gallup Poll 1981 revealed that 84% of those surveyed believed teachers should be required to pass a state examination in the subject they will teach before they are hired.

Characteristics of Graduates and Those Hired

After selecting teaching as a career, being admitted, screened and tested, which of these new teachers are graduated and hired? Weaver found that Graduate Record Exam verbal and nonverbal test scores for education majors were substantially lower than scores of majors in eight other professional fields in 1975-76, and teacher scores have fallen at a faster rate than the overall GRE scores since 1970. Graduating education majors in the National Longitudinal Study (class of 1976) ranked 14 out of 16 fields on SAT verbal scores, and 15 out of 16 on SAT math scores. Also, National Teacher Exam scores have declined 20 points from 1969-70 to 1974-75 (Weaver, 1979, p. 30).

The sample of education majors in the NLS class of 1976 who did not find teaching jobs scored higher on four of five measures of math and literacy competence than those education majors who were teaching, but none of these differences were statistically significant (Weaver, 1979, p. 30). By 1979 there was little difference in SAT verbal scores between education majors teaching (449 average SAT-V) and education majors (or certified) employed in other professions (453 SAT-V). The average verbal score of all others employed in other professional jobs was 493. The math score of 476 for

teachers, however, was 16 points lower than the 492 for education majors in non-education occupations, and 61 points lower than the average score (537) of all others in other professions (Dearman and Plisko, 1982, p. 88).

Perry, studying the 1980 graduating class at North Texas State University, compared those who found teaching jobs with those who sought but did not find teaching jobs. She concluded the "best" were not favored in the hiring process, finding no significant differences on academic variables of grade-point average, student teaching evaluation, and professional recommendations (Perry, 1981). A study of over 32,000 beginning teachers who entered teaching in North Carolina during the years 1973 to 1980 found similar results. Using scores on the NTE commons it was concluded that the academic ability of beginning teachers in North Carolina showed a general pattern of decline. Most of this decline was attributed to fewer higher academically qualified white females being employed. There was a 37% decline in the number of high-scoring white females employed in 1980 as compared to 1973 (Schlechty and Vance, 1981).

Job Opportunities

A summary of findings and methodology of seven major supply and demand studies has been developed (Roth, 1981). The article concluded that supply-demand relationships vary considerably depending on geographic location, subject area, and grade level (elementary or secondary). The demand for additional teachers has decreased from 163,000 in 1971 to 131,000 in 1980 (Frankel and Gerald, 1982). In the same time period, the number of bachelor's and master's degrees granted to education majors decreased from 265,300 to 221,600 in 1980 (a 16 percent decrease).

A follow-up of 1974-75 graduates (bachelor's degrees) showed 105,000 of 229,500 (46%) newly certified teaching candidates were not teaching in the spring of 1976 (Metz and Crane, 1980). A survey of 1976-77 bachelor's degree graduates (177,200) showed that by the spring of 1978 there were 71,000 (40%) candidates not teaching, but 56% of those not teaching did not apply for a teaching job (Metz and Crane, 1980).

Projections for the future look brighter. NCES predicts that the number of classroom teachers in public and private elementary/secondary schools will increase 8 percent from 2,439,000 in 1980 to 2,642,000 in 1990 (Frankel and Gerald, 1982). In addition, the percent of bachelor's recipients in education has declined from 21.6% in 1972 to 12.7% in 1980, a difference of over 58,000 potential teachers. This, in combination with an expected decrease in the college age population, could have a significant effect on supply-demand particularly if the number of available positions increases (NCES, 1981, p. 27).

NEA predicts that "If present trends continue there is an increasing likelihood for severe teacher shortages for many assignment areas in the mid and late 1980s" (Jones, 1981, p. 16).

States currently experiencing the greatest teacher shortages are Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Subject areas with shortages are mathematics, science, agriculture, special education, industrial arts, and vocational-technical subjects (Roth, 1981).

Teacher Education Funding and Credibility

A number of studies have been conducted by Peseau and Orr which demonstrate the inadequate financial support for teacher education programs (e.g. "The Outrageous Underfunding of Teacher Education" Phi Delta Kappan, 1980, 62(2), 100-102). A 1979-80 study involved 63 universities from 37 states. Some conclusions of the study were as follows:

1. Average weighted credit hour productivity per FTE faculty was more than twice as great as that recommended and applied in state funding formulas.
2. Average direct costs of instruction per year for an undergraduate teacher education student was 65% as much for a public school student, and 50% as much as the average cost per undergraduate in all university disciplines (Peseau, 1982, p. 14).

The credibility of teacher education can be inferred from the content and number of articles regarding the preparation of teachers. Lyons, in "Why Teachers Can't Teach," suggested that "Teacher education is a massive fraud. It drives out dedicated people, rewards incompetence, and wastes millions of dollars" (Lyons, 1980, p. 108). The Magazine Publishers Association gave the article its prestigious National Magazine Award for public service. A major city newspaper published an article by a former university president which was titled "Schools of Education Must Stop Being a Joke" (Bunzel, 1981).

The professional literature and popular press have published numerous scathing criticisms of teacher education, both from those within the profession and those external to it. A number of major organizations and commissions have proposed significant reforms reflecting dissatisfaction with the current system. These reform proposals will be discussed later in this article.

Condition of the Teaching Profession

In addition to data on academic qualifications of those who select teaching, are admitted to programs, and are hired, studies have also been conducted on the academic qualifications of those who remain in teaching. The North Carolina study, using scores on the NTE commons indicated that "those most likely to leave teaching early and in the greatest numbers come from the ranks of the more academically able," and that "those who are likely to stay in the classroom the longest and in the greatest numbers come from the ranks of the least academically able" (Schlechty and Vance, 1981, p. 106).

Teacher salaries might provide some insights into the ability of the profession to attract and retain the higher academically qualified individuals. In terms of 1980-81 dollars, the average salary of teachers was $20,533 in the 1972-73 school year and fell to $17,264 in 1980-81. By 1990-91 salaries are projected to reach $20,113 (in 1980-81 dollars) which is still less purchasing power than in 1970-71

($20,168), (Frankel and Gerald, 1982). Another research study reported 1980-81 teacher salaries as ranging from $16,340 in small districts (300 to 2,499) to $17,954 in large districts (25,000 or more). Superintendents' salaries ranged from $34,322 to $53,565 ("Average Salaries," 1981).

The National Education Association conducted a survey of teachers in 1980 to determine attitudes and opinions on several issues. Forty-one percent of those responding would not (29%) or certainly would not (12%) become teachers if they could start over again. Only 32% felt that way in the 1979 NEA poll, and 10.7% in 1961. Only 43% would continue teaching until retirement. Sixty-five percent were satisfied with their current jobs as teachers (NEA, 1980).

The Gallup Poll 1981 asked what the biggest problems with which the public schools in the community must deal. Only 11% identified difficulty of getting good teachers as the biggest problem. In rating their public schools, 9% gave them an "A" and 27% a "B" in 1981, down from 18% and 30% in 1974. In rating teachers in the community, 11% gave them an "A," 28% a "B," and only 6% a "fail." When parents were rated on how well they were raising their children only 29% gave them an "A" or "B." Teachers were thus regarded as doing their job better than parents were doing theirs.

Professional Development

A 1974 study on the status of teaching centers sampled school systems and colleges and universities to determine how many such "centers" exist and the nature of these centers. Extrapolating from the sample it was estimated there were as many as 4,500 teaching center programs at that time (Schmieder and Yarger, 1974, p. 6).

According to a 1979 survey of inservice education conducted by the National Council of States on Inservice Education, support for inservice programs is increasing. Approximately 90 percent of the states have formal authority for providing inservice education, and 70 percent spent state money for staff development (Education USA Special Report, 1981, p. 87). The federal government funded 60 teacher center projects

in 1978 and 29 more in 1979. The projects supported nearly 130 separate centers and served about 100,000 teachers in 150 school systems (Gudridge, 1980, p. 66). The federal teacher centers program has been eliminated and funds have been consolidated into the block grants to states.

Reform Efforts

The number and intensity of calls for reform in teacher education from major organizations have perhaps never been as great as they are now. The most commonly cited reform issues are teacher certification examinations, internships, recruitment, salaries, admissions, extended programs, performance evaluations, and recertification.

Organizations issuing position papers and the title of their documents are as follows:

Southern Regional Education Board: The Need for Quality (1981)

Education Commission of the States: "Raising Teacher Quality Levels" (Issuegram, 1982)

Educational Testing Service: "Teacher Competence" (Focus 1982)

National School Public Relations Association: Good Teachers: What To Look For (1981)

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education: Educating a Profession (1976)

"Educating a Profession: Profile of a Beginning Teacher" (1982)

Association of Teacher Educators: Improving Teacher Education (1978)

U.S. Department of Education, B. Othanel Smith: A Design for a School of Pedagogy (1980)

Council of Chief State School Officers: Report of the Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Teacher Certification, Preparation, and Accreditation

National Education Association: "Excellence in our Schools, Teacher Education: An Action Plan" (1982)

American Federation of Teachers: Statement on Teacher Education and Retention for the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education (1981)

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: Testimony by Ernest Boyer to House Postsecondary Education Subcommittee (1981)

National Commission on Excellence in Education: Appointed by President Reagan, Report due in March 1983

Teacher Corps: Agenda for Teacher Education Project (report due in 1982)

In addition to these organizations, 26 states have recently initiated major reforms in teacher education and certification. It was previously cited that up to 23 states had adopted teacher examination provisions. Entry year internships have been mandated or are being considered in Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. The American Federation of Teachers adopted a position statement at its annual convention in 1982 which provides for a one or two year internship in order to receive permanent certification.

State-level teacher evaluation policies exist in 27 states (Carey, undated). The relationship between these policies and teacher professional development is not clear.

## Conclusion

A wide variety of data have been collected on many different characteristics of the profession. Most of it has negative implications at each step of the way, from selecting teaching, through admission, selection during preparation programs, exit, hiring, and retention.

Dissatisfaction with teaching and low salaries reflect the conditions of employment in the teaching profession. Job opportunities have also been meager, although this appears more promising in the future, particularly at the elementary level.

General dissatisfaction with teaching and teacher education has led to a large number of major proposals for reform of teacher education and improved salaries.

Whether or not these will have much of an effect on the dismal facts cited will depend in large measure on the extent to which conditions for teaching improve, particularly in terms of salaries. When teachers are paid little more than sanitation workers (Raspberry, 1982), and considerably less than beginning school painters (Villec, 1982), we can hardly expect the best academically qualified to select or remain in education.

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